

Unimas students take tribal music to next level

KUCHING: Sonar Tribal, a team of students from Unimas, was established on October 16 last year during the Sarawak DiGi Startup Weekend Challenge for Change 2011 competition.

It went on to become one of the winners of the Sarawak regional competition and will represent Sarawak at the national finals to be held in KL this March 21.

Sonar Tribal is a group striving to preserve the heritage of tribal music of indigenous communities, particularly those from Sarawak, and introducing this music to a younger generation.

In the short period, since its formation, Sonar Tribal has grown by leaps and bounds in its quest to preserve and broadcast the potential of Sarawak tribal music.

Sonar Tribal has approached local talents to cooperate and record their own compositions, fusing ethnic music with contemporary music and making these music compositions available via the services available on the internet.

The goal is to not only preserve but to create awareness on the richness of music available among the native

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Benny Wee, DiGi head of Sarawak Region

communities in Sarawak. It is also hoped that by creating awareness on these communities, other groups can come in to further develop the potential of these communities beyond just music.

To date, Sonar Tribal has been performing at corporate dinners and interviewed on national television. Further plans are in place to have Sonar Tribal participate in the Rainforest World Music Festival 2012 as a workshop presenter.

Not confining itself to just musical presentations, Sonar Tribal is venturing into producing soundtracks for local film documentaries and providing downloadable sampling tracks for DJs or other music producers to use on their own music compositions.

Sonar Tribal's EP album, First Episode, consists of six songs incorporating

various tribal instruments such as the Sape, Darbuka and Kecakat, accompanied by more modern instruments such as guitars and bass.

The six original compositions are just the tip of the iceberg to the huge potential the team possesses. With an untapped resource bank of tribal music hidden away in the 30 or more native communities within Sarawak, the sky is the limit to what Sonar Tribal can achieve.

Proceeds from the album and other Sonar Tribal activities will be used to fund their activities for preserving, educating and highlighting the potential of tribal music stored in the native communities of Sarawak.

Sonar Tribal is always willing to work with other groups who wish to see the betterment and expand the potential of Sarawak's local communities. It is hoped that by working together, local

communities in Sarawak can benefit much, not just from a musical standpoint but also from improvements to their overall standards of living.

Benny Wee, DiGi's head of Sarawak Region said: "The Challenge for Change competition is our way of reaching out to the underserved communities, through ideas and innovations developed by the university students.

"Being a mobile internet service provider with a mission to enable 'Internet For All', it is essential that we use our core competencies and strengths to bring positive changes to the lives of our local communities.

"Sonar Tribal represents a really good social venture with a viable business model developed by our youths of today. It has a built-in element of cultural heritage conservation that is rare today.

"We are honoured to play a role as enablers to get their start-up weekend idea up and running, and look forward to seeing how they will fare in the finale in Kuala Lumpur".

Sonar Tribal is contactable at 014-9319754 or sonartribal@gmail.com.